

Elevating Education-System Employee Wellness

May 2026 Wellness Newsletter

Brought to you by ODE's School Wellness, Inclusion, Safety & Health (SWISH)

As June arrives, we enter a season of endings, celebrations, and much needed breaks. While most Oregonians follow the rhythm of the seasons, educators live by a unique tempo; the high energy of the school year followed by the quietude of summer.

As this year closes, the SWISH team wants to extend a sincere **thank you** for your dedication, time and care. We wish you and your loved ones a restorative summer filled with the activities that bring you the most joy.

If you are looking for ways to physically and mentally "reset" this break, we've curated a few somatic practices designed to help you release the tension of the past ten months. Somatic work isn't about fixing yourself; it's about giving your nervous system the permission to shift!

- **Move Your Energy:** Try Body Tapping to improve circulation and gently release stored physical stress [Body Tapping for Energy, Circulation and Stress](#)
- **Listen & Reflect:** Dive into [The Teaching Well Podcasts](#)—every episode offers insightful gems for educators.
- **Deepen Your Understanding:** Read the transformative book *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle* by Emily and Amelia Nagoski, or catch their [conversation with Brené Brown](#) to learn more about completing stress cycles.
- **Regulate Your System:** Explore [Choosing Therapy's Anxiety Workbook](#) to better understand where your body holds tension.
- **Connect in Community:** Join Trauma Informed Oregon for a "Somatic Moment" on June 8th or July 13th.

A Relational Reflection on Interpersonal Wellbeing: After 21 years in the classroom and 10 years as a site leader, I understand that educator well-being is not an abstract idea. It lives in the daily realities of schools, in conversations before students arrive, in difficult meetings after long days, in moments of uncertainty, and in the relationships that sustain us when the work feels heavy.

In this moment, many of us are feeling the weight – tight budgets, real constraints, and the urgency that comes with student performance data that does not yet reflect our

aspirations. These conditions are real, and they shape how we show up with one another.

So, the question becomes: who are we to each other in this work?

In schools, I learned that people are more willing to take risks, innovate, and remain committed when they feel respected, valued, and trusted — especially during difficult seasons. Educators do not need the absence of accountability; they need environments where accountability and humanity can coexist.

In times like these, it is easy for urgency to create distance. But it can also be an invitation to deepen trust, to check in, to ask for support, and to stay connected even when the work is hard.

Our well-being is not separate from our relationships. It is built through them. And how we choose to show up for one another will shape not only how we feel, but what we are able to accomplish. By: Michael Essien

Educator Spotlight ✎ Sherman County School District

Sherman County School District, located in the frontier town of Wasco in north central Oregon, knows the strengths and challenges of organizing districtwide wellness efforts in a rural region. With the support and encouragement of their superintendent, they have been a grantee and partner of Oregon Well-Being Trust (OWT), to fund and expand their employee wellness program since 2022.

Sherman County SD's two part-time wellness coordinators utilized their small community's close-knit culture to overcome resource constraints, address employee turnover, and support educators who were stretched thin to create a wellness program that is tailored to their workplace needs. As they created their program, they administered a staff well-being survey to make sure that all voices were represented and that they were able to offer a variety of opportunities that fit diverse preferences and schedules.

Employees currently take part in quarterly wellness challenges, prize drawings, and games that add levity and fun. Wellness events and celebrations—such as rotating potlucks and an end-of-year party—give staff time to connect, decompress, and build community. Gratitude walls, where students and colleagues share appreciation, bring everyday moments of connection at school. Wellness coordinators report strong results, including higher morale and a greater sense of community.

Interested in learning more about Oregon Well-Being Trust and funding that could support your staff's well-being? Please don't hesitate to reach out to siri@oregonwellbeing.org